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UNCLAS LAGOS 000265

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DS/DSS/ITA, DS/IP/AF, DS/DSS/OSAC, DS/IP/CC,  
CA/OCS/ACS, AF/W

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [CASC](#) [PINS](#) [EIND](#) [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [EINV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: EXPLOSION IN LAGOS

[1](#)1. Sensitive But Unclassified.

[1](#)2. At approximately 1110 on Sunday, February 2, 2003, there was an explosion in Idumagbo Street, located between the Carter Bridge and Third Mainland Bridge on Lagos Island. The area is a large market and residential area comprised of two and three story business and residential buildings.

[1](#)3. No official Americans live on Lagos Island and no FSN staff have been identified as living in this area of Lagos. The closest USG facility to the area of the explosion is the Consulate's Public Affairs Section which is located on the opposite end of the island about four miles away. Three buildings reportedly collapsed as a result of the explosion and several others are severely damaged. Julius Berger Construction Company was asked to assist with rescue operations. As of 1600 hours local on 3 February, there are no known American casualties among the twenty-eight confirmed dead, and up to fifty injured.

[1](#)4. Immediately following the explosion "area boys" and others began looting a bank that was either at ground zero or near the point of detonation. It took police several hours to contain the looting. Police have reportedly cordoned off the area.

[1](#)5. Local Guard Force REACT vehicles were sent to the area to ascertain the cause of the explosion. There are no confirmed reports of how the explosion occurred.

[1](#)6. Speculative reports point to several possible causes of the explosion. Initial reports indicated that either political motives, an attempt to hide problems at the bank, or a bank robbery gone bad were behind the blast. The police bomb squad continues to investigate, but offered RSO the possibility that some repairmen caused the explosion while drilling a hole and hitting some electrical wires connected to a water heater. Other reports indicate there may have been a bomb or a collection of gas cylinders that exploded. Immediately after the blast, the Lagos State Governor's office told CG that a gas cylinder in an area of poorly constructed buildings could have been responsible for the total collapse of one building and severe damage to others. The police are not expected to have conclusive evidence of the cause for at least several days.

HINSON-JONES